

THE NATION

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The Sick Elephant

One almost begins to feel sorry for the Central Intelligence Agency. It would seem that an agency which spends about \$750 million a year, a good deal of it in and around Washington, should have friends in the capital, including a few newsmen. Not so: the press, almost to a man, seems to detest the CIA. It is almost as if the press, weary of baiting the Communists, had turned on the very agency which has claimed to be in the front line against the Red menace.

Such unpopularity must be deserved. One might discount James R. Newman's philippic in *The Washington Post*; Mr. Newman, after all is only a scholar. But Mr. Newman's venom is exceeded by that of Henry J. Taylor, who not only writes a column for Scripps-Howard but who has also been an ambassador and knows the diplomatic service from the inside. Beginning with a good word for the FBI, whose few agents in embassies abroad are said to be well-behaved, Mr. Taylor refers to the CIA as an "overblown agency," a "sick elephant" that "frequently occupies an entire floor or more in an embassy and several separate buildings, plus its auxiliary installations," ranging from small apartments used as letter drops to country estates. For all its unaudited billions, however, it is said to be no match for its Soviet counterparts.

Unaudited billions? But haven't we been told that a "watchdog committee" of the Congress stringently supervises the CIA's activities? We have been so told, sure enough, but the information has been about as sound as the CIA's findings in, say, Cuba or Panama. The House Armed Services Committee does maintain a subcommittee which is supposed to oversee the CIA once a month, but it turns out that in 1963 the subcommittee met only five times. "These meetings with CIA Director John McCone," Rep. L. Mendel Rivers (D., S.C.) explains, "are difficult to prepare. Guards have to come. Agents take two hours or more to search the hearing room." Two other watchdog committees apparently encounter similar insuperable dif-

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ferences. One, connected with the House Appropriations Committee, refuses to say how often it meets; a Senate subcommittee manages to get together from two to six times a year.

For the past ten years Rep. Clement J. Zablocki (D., Wis.) has been urging the Congress to create a joint subcommittee on intelligence matters which would really keep an eye on the CIA. He is still trying. Perhaps something could be done if, besides Henry J. Taylor, ex-ambassador Earl E. T. Smith (Cuba) and Henry Cabot Lodge (now in South Vietnam) were called to testify. Ex-ambassador Joseph Farland (Panama) might also have something to contribute. The "sick elephant" needs surgery, and it should not be further delayed.